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100 Asande before embarking on a new task. I also knew that a study of the Nuer would be extremely difficult. Their country and character are alike intractable and what little I had previously seen of them convinced me that I would fail to establish friendly relations with them.

123 I have always considered, and still consider, that an adequate sociological study of the Nuer was impossible in the circumstances in which most of my work was done. The reader must judge what I have accomplished. I would ask him not to judge too harshly, for if my account is sometimes scanty and uneven I would urge that the investigation was carried out in adverse circumstances; that Nuer social organization is simple and their culture bare; and that what I describe is almost entirely based on direct observation and is not augmented by copious notes taken down from regular informants, of whom, indeed, I had none. I, unlike most readers, know the Nuer, and must judge my work more severely than they, and I can say that if this book reveals many insufficiencies I am amazed that it has ever appeared at all. A man must judge his labours by the obstacles he has overcome and the hardships he has endured, and by these standards I am not ashamed of the results.

It may interest readers if I give them a short description of the conditions in which I pursued my studies, for they will then be better able to decide which statements are likely to be based on sound observation and which to be less well-grounded.

122 I arrived in Nuerland early in 1930. Stormy weather prevented my luggage from joining me at Marseilles, and owing to errors, for which I was not responsible, my food stores were not forwarded from Malakal and my Zande servants were not instructed to meet me. I proceeded to Nuerland (Leek country) with my tent, some equipment, and a few stores bought at Malakal, and two servants, an Atwot and a Bellanda, picked up hastily at the same place.

When I landed at Yoahyang¹ on the Bahr el Ghazal the Catholic missionaries there showed me much kindness. I waited

¹ I take this early opportunity to inform readers that I have not spelt Nuer names and other words with phonetic consistency. I raise no objection, therefore, to any one spelling them differently. Generally I have given the nominative form, but an occasional genitive has crept into the text, diagrams, and maps.

- 122 for nine days on the river bank for the carriers I had been promised. By the tenth day only four of them had arrived and if it had not been for the assistance of an Arab merchant, who recruited some local women, I might have been delayed for an indefinite period.

On the following morning I set out for the neighbouring village of Pakur, where my carriers dropped tent and stores in the centre of a treeless plain, near some homesteads, and refused to bear them to the shade about half a mile further. Next day was devoted to erecting my tent and trying to persuade the Nuer, through my Atwot servant who spoke Nuer and some Arabic, to remove my abode to the vicinity of shade and water, which they refused to do. Fortunately a youth, Nhial, who has since been my constant companion in Nuerland, attached himself to me and after twelve days persuaded his kinsmen to carry my goods to the edge of the forest where they lived.

My servants, who, like most natives of the Southern Sudan, were terrified of the Nuer, had by this time become so scared that after several sleepless and apprehensive nights they bolted to the river to await the next steamer to Malakal, and I was left alone with Nhial. During this time the local Nuer would not lend a hand to assist me in anything and they only visited me to ask for tobacco, expressing displeasure when it was denied them. When I shot game to feed myself and my Zande servants, who had at last arrived, they took the animals and ate them in the bush, answering my remonstrances with the rejoinder that since the beasts had been killed on their land they had a right to them.

My main difficulty at this early stage was inability to converse freely with the Nuer. I had no interpreter. None of the Nuer spoke Arabic. There was no adequate grammar of the language and, apart from three short Nuer-English vocabularies, no dictionary. Consequently the whole of my first and a large part of my second expedition were taken up with trying to master the language sufficiently to make inquiries through it, and only those who have tried to learn a very difficult tongue without the aid of an interpreter and adequate literary guidance will fully appreciate the magnitude of the task.

After leaving Loek country I went with Nhial and my two

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Zande servants to Lou country. We motored to Muot dit with the intention of residing by the side of its lake, but found it entirely deserted, for it was too early for the annual concentration there. When some Nuer were found they refused to divulge the whereabouts of nearby camps and it was with considerable difficulty that we located one. We pitched our tents there and when the campers retired on Muot dit we accompanied them. 122

My days at Muot dit were happy and remunerative. I made friends with many Nuer youths who endeavoured to teach me their language and to show me that if I was a stranger they did not regard me as an obnoxious one. Every day I spent hours fishing with these lads in the lake and conversing with them in my tent. I began to feel my confidence returning and would have remained at Muot dit had the political situation been more favourable. A Government force surrounded our camp one morning at sunrise, searched for two prophets who had been leaders in a recent revolt, took hostages, and threatened to take many more if the prophets were not handed over. I felt that I was in an equivocal position, since such incidents might recur, and shortly afterwards returned to my home in Zandeland, having accomplished only three and a half months' work among the Nuer.

It would at any time have been difficult to do research among the Nuer, and at the period of my visit they were unusually hostile, for their recent defeat by Government forces and the measures taken to ensure their final submission had occasioned deep resentment. Nuer have often remarked to me, 'You raid us, yet you say we cannot raid the Dinka'; 'You overcame us with firearms and we had only spears. If we had had firearms we would have routed you'; and so forth. When I entered a cattle camp it was not only as a stranger but as an enemy, and they seldom tried to conceal their disgust at my presence, refusing to answer my greetings and even turning away when I addressed them.

At the end of my 1930 visit to Nuerland I had learnt a little of the language but had the scantiest notes of their customs. In the dry season of 1931 I returned to make a fresh attempt, going first for a fortnight to the American Mission at Nasser, where I was generously assisted by the American and Nuer staff,

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122 and then to cattle camps on the Nyanding river—an unfortunate choice, for the Nuer there were more hostile than those I had hitherto encountered and the conditions were harsher than any I had previously experienced. The water was scanty and foul, the cattle were dying of rinderpest, and the camps swarmed with flies. The Nuer would not carry my stores and equipment, and as I had only two donkeys, one of them lame, it was impossible to move. Eventually I managed to obtain a lorry and extricate myself, but not before experiencing the Nuer in his most paralysing mood. As every effort was made to prevent me from entering the cattle camps and it was seldom that I had visitors I was almost entirely cut off from communication with the people. My attempts to prosecute inquiries were persistently obstructed.

Nuer are expert at sabotaging an inquiry and until one has resided with them for some weeks they steadfastly stultify all efforts to elicit the simplest facts and to elucidate the most innocent practices. I have obtained in Zandeland more information in a few days than I obtained in Nuerland in as many weeks. After a while the people were prepared to visit me in my tent, to smoke my tobacco, and even to joke and make small talk, but they were unwilling either to receive me in their windscreens or to discuss serious matters. Questions about customs were blocked by a technique I can commend to natives who are inconvenienced by the curiosity of ethnologists. The following specimen of Nuer methods is the commencement of a conversation on the Nyanding river, on a subject which admits of some obscurity but, with willingness to co-operate, can soon be elucidated.

I: Who are you?

Cuol: A man.

I: What is your name?

Cuol: Do you want to know my name?

I: Yes.

Cuol: You want to know my name?

I: Yes, you have come to visit me in my tent and I would like to know who you are.

Cuol: All right. I am Cuol. What is your name?

I: My name is Pritchard.

Cuol: What is your father's name?

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I: My father's name is also Pritchard.

Cwo! No, that cannot be true. You cannot have the same name as your father. 122

I: It is the name of my lineage. What is the name of your lineage?

Cwo! Do you want to know the name of my lineage?

I: Yes.

Cwo! What will you do with it if I tell you? Will you take it to your country?

I: I don't want to do anything with it. I just want to know it since I am living at your camp.

Cwo! Oh well, we are Lou.

I: I did not ask you the name of your tribe. I know that. I am asking you the name of your lineage.

Cwo! Why do you want to know the name of my lineage?

I: I don't want to know it.

Cwo! Then why do you ask me for it? Give me some tobacco.

I defy the most patient ethnologist to make headway against this kind of opposition. One is just driven crazy by it. Indeed, after a few weeks of associating solely with Nuer one displays, if the pun be allowed, the most evident symptoms of 'Nuerosis'.

From the Nyanding I moved, still without having made any real progress, to a cattle camp at Yakwac on the Sobat river where I pitched my tent a few yards from the windcreens. Here I remained, save for a short interval spent at the American Mission, for over three months—till the commencement of the rains. After the usual initial difficulties I at last began to feel myself a member of a community and to be accepted as such, especially when I had acquired a few cattle. When the campers at Yakwac returned to their inland village I had no means of accompanying them and intended to visit Leek country again. A severe attack of malaria sent me to Malakal hospital, and thence to England, instead. Five and a half months' work was accomplished on this second expedition.

During the tenure of a subsequent appointment in Egypt I published in *Sudan Notes and Records* essays which form the basis of this book, for I had not expected to have a further opportunity to visit the Nuer. However, in 1935 I was granted a two years' research fellowship by the Leverhulme trustees to make an intensive study of the Fagan Galla of Ethiopia. As delay was caused by diplomatic chicanery I spent two and a half

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months on the Sudan-Ethiopian frontier making a survey of the Eastern Anuak, and when, at last, I entered Ethiopia the imminence of Italian invasion compelled me to jettison my Galla studies and enabled me to advance my investigation of the Nuer, during a further seven weeks' residence in their country, by revising earlier notes and by collecting more material. I visited the Nuer who live on the Pibor river, renewed my acquaintance with friends of the Nasser Mission and at Yakwac, and spent about a month among the Eastern Jikany at the mouth of the Nyanding.

In 1936, after making a survey of the Nilotic Luo of Kenya, I spent a final seven weeks in Nuerland, visiting that part of it which lies to the west of the Nile, especially the Karlual section of the Leek tribe. My total residence among the Nuer was thus about a year. I do not consider a year adequate time in which to make a sociological study of a people, especially of a difficult people in adverse circumstances, but serious sickness on both the 1935 and 1936 expeditions closed investigations prematurely.

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Besides physical discomfort at all times, suspicion and obstinate resistance encountered in the early stages of research, absence of interpreter, lack of adequate grammar and dictionary, and failure to procure the usual informants, there developed a further difficulty as the inquiry proceeded. As I became more friendly with the Nuer and more at home in their language they visited me from early morning till late at night, and hardly a moment of the day passed without men, women, or boys in my tent. As soon as I began to discuss a custom with one man another would interrupt the conversation in pursuance of some affair of his own or by an exchange of pleasantries and jokes. The men came at milking-time and some of them remained till mid-day. Then the girls, who had just finished dairy-work, arrived and insisted on attention. Married women were less frequent visitors, but boys were generally under the awning of my tent if grown-ups were not present to drive them away. These endless visits entailed constant badinage and interruption and, although they offered opportunity for improving my knowledge of the Nuer language, imposed a severe strain. Nevertheless, if one chooses to reside in a Nuer camp one must submit to Nuer custom, and they are persistent and tireless visitors. The chief

ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF AFRICA

FOREWORD

12/ The preparation of a comprehensive survey of the tribal societies of Africa was discussed by the Executive Council of the Institute as far back as 1937, but the interruption and restricting of its activities caused by the war resulted in the postponement of the project. Events and developments during recent years, however, have led to a wider recognition of the need for collating and making more generally available the wealth of existing but uncoordinated material on the ethnic groupings and social conditions of African peoples, particularly in connection with plans for economic and social development. Moreover, it appeared that the International African Institute, as an international body which has received support from and performed services for the different Colonial governments, was in a very favourable situation for undertaking such a task.

12/ The Institute, therefore, in 1944 worked out a scheme for the preparation of an Ethnographic Survey of Africa. A committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Huxcliffe-Brown, was appointed to consider the scope and form of the Survey (the Editor's name appears on each volume) and collaboration was established with research institutions in South Africa, Rhodesia, East Africa, French West Africa, Belgium and the Belgian Congo. In addition to a grant from the British Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, awarded on the recommendation of the Colonial Science Research Council, the Institute has received a grant from the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan to assist in the preparation and publication of sections relevant to that territory, and this assistance is gratefully acknowledged in connection with the present study.

12/ The aim of the Ethnographic Survey is to present a concise, critical, and accurate account of our present knowledge of the tribal groupings, distribution, physical environment, social conditions, political and economic structure, religious beliefs and cult practices, technology and art of the African peoples. The material is to be presented as briefly and on as consistent a plan as possible, and the text will be supplemented by maps and comprehensive bibliographies.

12/ The Ethnographic Survey is being published as a series of separate, self-contained studies, each devoted to one particular people or cluster of peoples. It is hoped that publication in this form will make the results more quickly and readily available to those interested in specific areas or groups. A list of the sections which have already appeared is given on the cover of this volume.

12/ Since the unequal value and the generally unsystematic nature of the available information constituted a chief reason for undertaking this survey, it will be obvious that the material here presented can make no claim to be complete or definitive. Every effort has been made, however, to scrutinise all available literature and to check it by reference to unpublished sources and to workers actually in the field; thus it is

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